

VZCZCXRO5136
PP RUEHDBU
DE RUEHMO #6547 1711519
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 201519Z JUN 06
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7862
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHDX/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 006547

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DEPARTMENT FOR INL/PRAHAR
DOJ FOR OPDAT (LEHMANN) AND OIA (BURKE)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/20/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [KCRM](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: YURIY CHAYKA NOMINATED AS RUSSIA'S PROCURATOR
GENERAL

REF: A. MOSCOW 6268

[1](#)B. MOSCOW 5934

Classified By: Ambassador William J. Burns. Reasons 1.4 (B/D).

[1](#)1. (SBU) President Putin nominated current Minister of Justice, Yuriy Chayka, as the next Procurator General to replace Vladimir Ustinov, who resigned June 2. The Federation Council's Committee on Legal and Judicial Affairs supported the nomination June 19; it will go before the full Federation Council June 23, where it is expected to win approval, and Chayka can then legally assume his duties. In his first public statement after his nomination, Chayka noted that the office of the Procurator General could be effective in fighting corruption, but he spoke against setting up special offices within the Procurator General to address corruption among senior officials. Instead, he hinted that pressing for revision of the legal education system in Russia might be among his early priorities.

[1](#)2. (SBU) A professional lawyer by training, Chayka has worked as a prosecutor since his graduation from the Sverdlovsk Juridical Institute in 1976. He is one of the few senior holdovers from the Yeltsin era where, among other positions, he served as the acting Procurator General in [1](#)1999. Appointed Minister of Justice in 2000, Chayka has cultivated a reputation as being among the relatively few cabinet officers who have made themselves accessible to the public, including human rights organizations that have worked with him and other officials in the Justice Ministry to improve conditions in the country's prison system. Lyudmila Alekseyeva, head of the Moscow Helsinki Group, was among those who reportedly characterized Chayka's nomination as a good choice.

[1](#)3. (C) COMMENT: Although Chayka had been mentioned as one of the candidates for Ustinov's job (ref A), his nomination still came somewhat as a surprise. While Chayka has built a solid reputation as a professional prosecutor and effective manager, his unquestioned loyalty to Putin was probably the most important factor in his choice. Under Ustinov, the procuracy had become a stronghold for the "siloviki" wing of the Kremlin. Observers claim Chayka's appointment should be seen as a reflection of Putin's desire to maintain a balance of power between competing Kremlin factions in important government posts. Attention will now turn to Chayka's replacement at the Justice Ministry. PolPred Dmitry Kozak is being mentioned as one of the top candidates. Kozak's appointment as Justice Minister would bring him back to the capital, but it is unclear how he -- or anybody as Justice Minister -- could advance his political fortunes in that traditionally weak position.

